Madam President,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the EU.

I wish to thank to thank the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom for its statement. It is important that we hear the voice of civil society in the Conference on Disarmament, an objective my delegation continues to support.

Madam President,

I should like to thank you for the excellent manner in which you have presided over our work.

In spite of the fact that yet another attempt at agreeing a draft programme of work has once again met with a clear and open rejection of only one delegation only a few weeks ago, you took it upon yourself to conduct an impressive series of informal consultations to find out whether other avenues might be possible. But - not surprisingly, as things stand – it transpired once again that all core issues on our agenda continue to remain blocked as far as the opening of negotiations is concerned. This state of affairs is particularly deplorable with respect to the long time project of a treaty on fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes, since this is clearly the item on which nearly all sides are ready to start to work.

Madam President,

Before I elaborate on this further, most unfortunate recent developments make it necessary to deal with an issue first which Germany, as a member state of a forum which focuses on nuclear armaments issues, i.e. the Conference on Disarmament, attaches considerable importance to taking a stand on.

On 12 February my delegation has condemned the third nuclear test conducted by the DPRK
in the early hours of that day “in the strongest possible terms”. The statement went on to express the expectation that “the international community must give a clear answer to this renewed provocation.”

Since then this chamber has seen repeated, extensive and even quite heated exchanges over this issue.

Madam President,

As a matter of principle my delegations upholds with profound conviction the right of every delegation to argue the case it has to represent on behalf of its government, no matter whether things are said which we see fundamentally different or which at times we may even find objectionable. As Montaigne once observed: “One needs very strong ears to hear oneself freely criticized”.

The international community needs this space of a free exchange of views, because it is the indispensable precondition on the arduous road of hopefully reaching common understandings at some point in the future.

The guarantee of a free space in this sense must, however, never be misunderstood as a licence to use intimidating language vis-à-vis others.

My delegation therefore protested in no uncertain terms in the plenary meeting on 19 February, when the representative of the DPRK considered by implication the “final destruction” of its neighbour to the south, a member of the CD.

In the meantime, less than a week ago, the UN Security Council has passed a new resolution, that is resolution 2094 of 7 March, which I do not need to go into because it speaks for itself.

However, it is a matter of utmost regret and indeed deeply disturbing that the DPRK, instead of reflecting soberly on what it means that yet another resolution was adopted in the UNSC unanimously condemning its proliferation activities, has quite on the contrary chosen to resort to an astounding language of threats vis-à-vis other members of the international community.

Such language of threatening the use of force simply cannot be accepted or tolerated in today’s world.

The German Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle, has condemned DPRK’s threats with a nuclear first strike in the strongest possible terms. He called on the leadership in Pyongyang not to aggravate the situation in the region further by irresponsible sabre-rattling, to stop the rhetoric of war, and to terminate DPRK’s nuclear and missile tests.

Madam President,

We have certainly no desire of contributing to an escalation in rhetoric regarding this most unfortunate matter. On the contrary - but we feel that it is imperative that the international community takes a very clear stand when states start to engage in threatening language of such kind.
Madam President,

Let me now turn to the subject that you suggested we should discuss today, i.e. the subject of negotiations on fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes.

Germany attaches much importance to a treaty which prohibits the production of such material which is supported in particular by all states which have respective technical capabilities. One needs not to be an arms control expert to understand immediately why the conclusion of such a treaty is commonly referred to as “the next logical step” in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, because after the arrangements of the NPT and the CTBT it would clearly be the obvious thing to do next on the road to a world without nuclear weapons – a final destination which, as everyone who has a sober judgement is aware, will require a very sustained long-term effort, so that intermediate steps like an FMCT would obviously lend themselves as a practical way forward.

It is most unfortunate that in spite of very many efforts over decades it has proven impossible to this day to get negotiations going on such a treaty in a sustained manner in the CD.

In all these years there have been and there continue to be many reasons for that sorry state of affairs.

One key factor, presumably the key factor, continues to be the contentious question of the scope of such negotiations.

Some – and I believe it is fair to say that these are mostly the nuclear weapons possessor states - feel that such negotiations should only deal with future production of fissile material, whereas others are of the view that such negotiations would permit consideration not only of future but also of past production, while still others take the view that consideration should not only relate to production of fissile material (past or future) but also to other issues, such as the management of such material.

Madam President,

I am confident you and colleagues will have realized immediately that I borrowed much of what I just said from an often referred to - but I fear not so often actually read - document, the so-called Shannon mandate, which will be 18 years old in a few days time. This document was, of course, a subtly crafted and at the same time shaky compromise in that its conclusion was simply to state that delegations could raise their respective views in future negotiations on fissile material.

I think it is fair to say that if in all these years before and after the crafting of the Shannon mandate, a readiness would have existed on all sides to state in a draft programme of work in a straightforward manner that negotiations would also address past production, the entire project could have developed much more productively. One would have left it to the negotiations proper to find out which course of action would turn out to be more plausible in terms of objective necessities and requirements.

We for one feel that in order to arrive at a verifiable treaty – which appears as a sine qua non given what is at stake and which appears now to be broadly accepted, at least on the face of it – a degree of transparency with regard to past production of fissile material for nuclear
weapons purposes will be required. I think it is in order to state that a vast majority of states see this in pretty much the same way.

Madam President,

Germany has over many years been a promoter of FMCT negotiations. We have always participated actively in discussions on the subject in the CD. I would also refer to the seminar the Federal Foreign Office organized in Berlin in 2009 in which many CD representatives participated; I would also refer to the two meetings of scientific experts we organized together with our Dutch friends in 2012. To the FMCT side events held in 2011 by Australia and Japan we contributed with an experienced long time expert in the field. And finally I would mention our contribution to a Working Paper introduced in the CD in 2011 by Spain on behalf of eight member states (CD/1910 of 9 June).

Madam President,

We continue to take the view that efforts to start work in the CD on a treaty dealing with fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes must continue.

We regard the establishment of a Group of Governmental Experts dealing with the subject at hand as an instrument which can either help to get such negotiations going in the CD or at a minimum as a useful tool which can make recommendations on possible elements that could contribute to a future treaty and aspects thereof.

In a sense it is of course deplorable that the UN General Assembly had to resort to that route to advance this cause, but under the circumstances it is an option which one could simply not miss to pursue.

Germany and my delegation remain ready to make their contribution.

I thank you.